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Author(s): Lisa Katherine Battye

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**Care in**  
**Trinity:**

**A Paradigm for  
Pastoral Care**

## INTRODUCTION

### *Aims and methodology*

‘Care in Trinity’ examines the implications of a relational model of the Trinitarian doctrine of God for a contemporary paradigm for pastoral care. It explores why and how the Trinity can provide a definition of pastoral care for the purposes of identifying, planning and evaluating it.

\*If a working definition of theology is ‘the methodological effort to understand and interpret the truth of revelation’<sup>1</sup> then a definition of applied theology might be the work of applying ‘the methodological effort to understand and interpret the truth of revelation’ to the practical needs of people. Any theological effort to understand is contextual, and contemporary theologians would seem to be better placed than others to articulate the questions that underlie the concerns of their generation. It therefore seems reasonable to expect contemporary theologians to be particularly well placed to contribute to contemporary applied theology, and so for the present project I have deliberately reflected upon *contemporary* thought wherever possible in the discussion.

My research has taken the basic form of a literature survey plus reflection and it grew after the manner of a collage. Its principle aim was to draw several interests in the subject together into a correlation, and to use this as a basis from which to draw conclusions concerning the nature of pastoral care.

\* My understanding of this ‘correlational’ approach to theology is based on the work of David Tracy and others, as developed by Don Browning in the service of defining fundamental practical theology.<sup>2</sup> This sees Christian theology as ‘a critical dialogue between the implicit questions and the explicit answers of the Christian classics and the explicit questions and implicit answers of contemporary cultural experiences and practices.’(p46). It also follows a contemporary trend to employ a ‘dialogical principle’, which has been defined elsewhere as one in which ‘truth is never the product of a single monological voice but emerges out of the interplay of a plurality of voices’.<sup>3</sup> The result is envisaged as an applied version of Christian truth after the manner of a mutual relation with intimate connection (i.e. a correlation).

\*The foregoing definition of a correlation is valuable in that it indicates provisionality about the end result of the process. If a correlation is a mutual relation then presumably it can be adjusted or broken and re-formed in much the same way as any relation can. However, some relations are really quite durable, and the term ‘correlation’ is sometimes used in theology in such a way as to suggest a practical usefulness and durability that might be better called an ‘alloy’. Used in scientific description an alloy is a blend of chemical elements which ends up having its own properties. It is the product of a manufacturing process combining two or more raw materials. Its properties may subsequently be compared and contrasted with those of

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<sup>1</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:240.

<sup>2</sup> Browning, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Pattison, 1995:2-4. On contemporary use of this principle see Selvanayagah, 1998.

other alloys, and it may possibly even be further combined with them. It is my hope that my investigations here produce a working tool for use in pastoral care that has the properties of an alloy. An alloy which might possibly be correlated with the results of a similar exercise from the starting-point of a quite different theology of God, thus contributing to interfaith dialogue and to a more 'inclusive' paradigm for pastoral care.

\*As I understand it, a correlational approach in applied theology requires the theologian to monitor the cultural development of new questions, or new versions of old questions in order that the discipline may be enabled to address real issues. When new questions and concerns present themselves it becomes incumbent upon the theologian to seek new or revised correlations. These can be expected to bear the stamp of the former ones by virtue of their shared relation to the Christian classics but also to be better vehicles for the application of Christian truth in the new cultural situation.

*\*Situatedness.*

Mary Grey advises that 'one of the most important lessons we have learnt in feminist theology is to be clear from what context we speak and pose our questions'<sup>4</sup>. The relevance of this project to my own situation is obvious, given that the study has been undertaken as part of my ordination training. It has also been influenced by my desire to 'do theology'<sup>5</sup> in a manner that can be judged feminist (by which I mean it will promote the full humanity of women as well as men). It has also been influenced by my gender, social situation and training in several branches of human care.<sup>6</sup> My situatedness no doubt bears on the fact that I have chosen to work with a model of God described by a feminist theologian, and on my preference for conclusions that do not employ specifically religious language, and so might in theory be generalised to inform *all* caring situations.

My initial need was to allow the emergence of an understanding of divine relations capable of informing the human relationship of pastoral care. This meant correlating divine and human relations. The search for a description of *divine* relations in the Christian tradition required me to pay attention to the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. For reasons of time and space I confined my investigation of *human* relations to the intra-personal and the inter-personal as experienced in pastoral counselling. It was my hope that in choosing to 'begin' with God I would not be hindering the contribution of the human sciences. My choice to begin thus indicates my desire to contribute to the on-going development of Western Christianity, in which the doctrine of the Trinity is a touchstone of orthodoxy.<sup>7</sup> It is

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<sup>4</sup> Grey, 1993:43.

<sup>5</sup> Green, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., nursing, counselling and group analysis.

<sup>7</sup> On the East-West split over this doctrine see British Council of Churches [hereafter, BCC], 1989, vol. 2, pp37-40.

my hope that the discussion will contribute to contemporary *phronesis*<sup>8</sup>, or ‘practical wisdom’ within the discipline of practical theology.

### *Epistemology.*

The decision to employ contemporary knowledge has led me to seek throughout to operate from the basis of a postmodern epistemology. This is not to ignore critique of ideological postmodernism<sup>9</sup>, nor to imply that a postmodern pastoral theology may not be flawed. I do, however, disagree strongly with critics who appear to read a preconceived negative definition of postmodernism as ‘ethical non-realism’ into current attempts to re-conceive pastoral theology in postmodern terms.<sup>10</sup>

When I use the term ‘postmodern’ I am not speaking about ‘a laid-back pluralism of styles and a vague desire to have done with the pretensions of high modernist culture’, as it is described in the Oxford Companion to Philosophy.<sup>11</sup> I am using it as a signifier for the contemporary cultural departure from a foundational approach to questions of truth. As I understand it, in the postmodern imagination truth is not seen as foundational, or as relative, but rather as contextual, local and plural.

\*Understood in this way I regard postmodernism as having the potential to open exciting new doors for theology. Graham says that ‘theorists of gender have turned increasingly to ‘postmodern’ strategies for critical tools to guide their enquiries’<sup>12</sup>, and my research here suggests the value of applying similar tools to the study of Christian doctrine, especially the doctrine of the Trinity. Nonetheless, I would not want to see the contribution of the new culture operating in an ‘either-or’ manner, in a way that disavowed the contribution of other cultures to contemporary questions.<sup>13</sup> Nor would I want to see it degenerating into word games, such as those that are currently being played with linguistic theory in some contemporary theology.<sup>14</sup> I would like to see it being ‘mined’ for what the approach has to offer the ongoing development of Christianity.

\*To that end I am particularly interested in the light postmodernism throws on the *function* of doctrine. It seems to me that to claim that doctrine is applicable to lived experience is akin to understanding truth as contextual, local and plural, for lived experience is necessarily contextual, local and plural. It may be that that people will

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<sup>8</sup> Browning, 1991:38-42.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. O’Neil, 1995 and Graham, 1995:31.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Nigel Biggar’s critique of Elaine Graham’s pastoral theology (Biggar, 1998:23,22: Graham, 1996). See also O’Neil, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Honderich (Ed.), 1995:708.

<sup>12</sup> Graham, 1995:31.

<sup>13</sup> Ref. Badham, 1998.

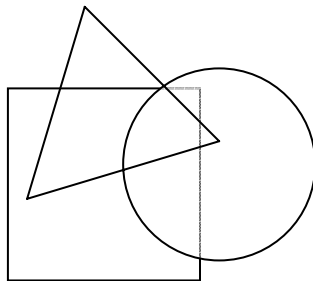
<sup>14</sup> E.g. Cupitt, 1990.

gain a greater respect for doctrine when they see theologians adopting more ‘truly’ postmodern approaches than we tend to see in much Christian discourse.

\*By a ‘truly’ postmodern approach I am assuming that we do not mistake postmodernism for relativism. Local, plural contexts are not exclusively relative. They can be interpreted differently but their existence is not dependent upon their interpretation, even while they themselves are subtly altered by it over time. This gives them a foundational quality in addition to the relative quality suggested by their plurality.<sup>15</sup>

\*I propose that by adopting this ideological stance I able to proceed methodologically by means of a ‘fractured foundationalism’, a kind of middle ground between relativism and foundationalism. This does not argue with the existence of a material objective reality ‘out there’, independent of individual constructions of it. However it does refuse to hold that truth is independent of those constructions. In my opinion this links the ideological and the material without collapsing one into the other, in a way that serves applied theology well.

The above is one way of describing the epistemological ‘feminist standpoint position’ first mooted by Elizabeth Grosz but developed for use by the secular sociologist, Lis Stanley.<sup>16</sup> This position can be summed up in the claim that ‘...*there are truths which speak to the existence of different, overlapping, but not co-terminus material realities*’.<sup>17</sup> I will be referring to this claim later. For now I propose that a diagrammatic representation of this epistemology might look like **Fig 1**.



**Fig. 1. A diagrammatic representation of Stanley’s ‘Feminist Standpoint Position’ using ideational shapes for different material realities.**<sup>18</sup>

*Language and feminist concerns.*

It has long been accepted that ‘following in the footsteps of Heidegger and above all of Wittgenstein, we have seen that we can pause in front of language as before any

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<sup>15</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Stanley, Lis, 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley, 1990:41 (italics mine).

<sup>18</sup> Stanley, Lis, 1990.

other object... and try to discover what it is, and the nature of its *structure*'. This is to be done by means of a 'construction or re-construction of a linguistic model by means of which we can catch, as if in net, as much as possible of the *reality* of a language whose fluidity cannot be contained'.<sup>19</sup> It is acknowledgement of that fluidity that allows me to point to the gendered nature of much of the English language and question the contemporary appropriateness of continuing to use language that is gendered in theological discourse about God.

\*To question the appropriateness of using gendered language is not to imagine that gender does not influence the way we think, for gender is part of our situatedness and hence informs the way we interpret the world.<sup>20</sup> It is rather to recognise that the use of gendered language to refer to that which has no gender has a conditioning influence upon the way we think. When, for example, the term 'men' is used to denote a group of males and females, but the term 'women' cannot be similarly used, the effect is to draw attention to the particular relevance of the inclusion of males to the subject being discussed. This heightened attention gives the impression that male interests and male contributions are more relevant and valuable in the discourse that is employing the language.

\*In this context, I feel the acknowledgement of feminist concerns about language in studies such as 'The Forgotten Trinity'<sup>21</sup> only begins to scratch at the surface of what some theologians call the BOM-FOG problem.<sup>22</sup> BOM-FOG is shorthand for 'Brotherhood Of Man and Fatherhood Of God' and is used to refer to the use of exclusively male analogues for humanity and divinity. The problematic *effect* of this use of language on our understanding is, of course, obscured by centuries' use of these terms, yet it is important to recognise it in for any search for a paradigm of care to be truly contemporary. I will therefore in due course follow Wren's example and ask 'what language shall I borrow?'<sup>23</sup> This is in line with my desire to incorporate a contemporary understanding of the effect of language in general in this discourse.

To illustrate what I mean by a contemporary understanding of the effect of language I will use Stubbs' diagrammatic representation in **Fig. 2** below of three ways of understanding the nature of language.<sup>24</sup> This is particularly useful because it suggests three ways in which religious language may be considered to represent truth. The first line in the diagram illustrates the kind of approach that holds that our language is a perfect representation of the reality out there. The second is based on a more modern, and supposedly scientific doubt about the ability of any language (or truth-claim) to do this. Rather it implies that our language is only ever an imperfect reflection of

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<sup>19</sup> Aranguren, 1967:37 (*italics original*).

<sup>20</sup> Graham, 1995

<sup>21</sup> BCC, 1989, Volume 1, p39.




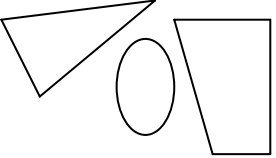
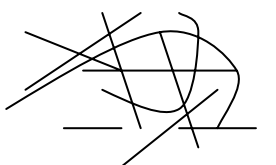

<sup>22</sup> Used in internet debates and by the current membership of the Wiley Seminar in the Religions and Theology Department at Manchester University.

<sup>23</sup> Wren, 1989. See also Ruether, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Stubbs, 1996:25.

reality out there – that we have to keep trying to discover the truth. The third line takes an entirely postmodern approach. It illustrates the contention that reality is shaped by language – that the world is not discovered but ‘created’ by signification.<sup>25</sup>

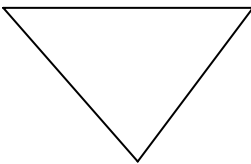
\* I do not feel it is ultimately reasonable to prefer one of these three approaches to the exclusion of the other two. Using terms that are used in the foregoing epistemology, they appear to me to be merely different, and ‘not co-terminus’ ways of thinking about language. They are also overlapping contributors in the search for an adequate understanding of the relationship between language and reality, each with merit for particular usage. The differences in their potential usage could be illustrated by choosing to think of the different shapes in **Fig 1** as symbolic of the three ways of thinking about language, rather than presenting them as representations of three different ‘material realities’ (see **Fig 3**). In other words, choosing to see all three linguistic philosophies (which roughly equate to pre-modern, modern and post-modern understandings) as valuable to the task of theological description of ‘material realities’ or truths.

Reality	Language	
		Our language is a perfect representation of reality out there
		Our language is an imperfect representation of reality out there – we have to keep trying to discover the truth
		Reality out there is shaped by language – the world is not discovered but ‘created’ by signification.

**Fig. 2. Possible relationships between language and reality.**<sup>26</sup>

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Our language is a perfect representation of reality out there =




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<sup>25</sup> See Cupitt, 1990.

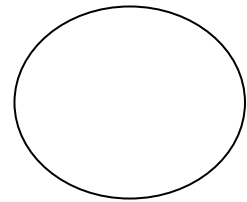
<sup>26</sup> Stubbs, 1996:27.



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Our language is an imperfect representation of reality out there –  
we have to keep trying to discover the truth =

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Reality out there is shaped by language – the world is not  
discovered but ‘created’ by signification =

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**Fig. 3. Three possible understandings of the relationship between language and reality represented as shapes that appear in Fig. 1.**

Notwithstanding the discussion above the more important point for the present concern is that to fail to appreciate the postmodern approach to how language ‘works’ is to refuse to recognise its power to conform reality to its inherent politics. One needs to appreciate the creative power of words. Not to do so is to hinder the theological task, and to make idols out of words.

If we are prepared to take the postmodern view seriously then we will appreciate the likelihood that if words being used to denote for the Supreme Being are uni-gendered analogues they will inform the ‘construction’ of a superior sex. Jann Clanton’s chapter, ‘If God Can Include Three Persons, Can’t God Include Two Genders?’ is of particular relevance here because it addresses this problem in the light of the early heresies concerning the Trinity.<sup>27</sup> So is the increasing use among feminist theologians of the term Godde for God. This term makes neither a patriarchal (God<sup>28</sup>) nor a matriarchal (Goddess) claim for Godde – in other words, it ‘constructs’ a view of God as neither male nor female - without removing the possibility of addressing Godde in terms of either sex in specific circumstances.<sup>29</sup>

\*It is, of course, possible to think of Christianity as a self-regulative total system not dissimilar from a language that merely needs to be learnt, as in Lindbeck’s ‘cultural-linguistic’ approach to the nature of doctrine.<sup>30</sup> This approach would favour the idea that the analogues currently in use for the Three Persons of the Trinity should be regarded as fixed symbols. However to adopt this view would be to define reality in

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<sup>27</sup> Clanton, 1990:55-65.

<sup>28</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Reference internet postings on the: [feminist-theology@mailbase.ac.uk](mailto:feminist-theology@mailbase.ac.uk). e.g. Matthews, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Lindbeck, 1984: 64.

an exclusively intrasystemmatic, or ‘immanent’, and therefore only partial way.<sup>31</sup> It would also be to turn a blind eye to the contribution of some contemporary linguistic philosophy (e.g. that of Jürgen Habermas). Habermasian theory presents formulaic truth in terms of ‘enacted consensus’. This does not deny the rule-governance of rational conversation that, Habermas argues, is established by intersubjectivity, but it does refuse to invest words with an absolute authority.<sup>32</sup> The simplest conclusion to be drawn from all this is in line with the observation that ‘we cannot do without words but we must constantly remember their provisional, revisable character’.<sup>33</sup>

One way of overcoming the problem of the gendered nature of divine analogues in the present work might have been to use a plurality of means of delineating them. However my contention that different approaches are appropriate for different uses leads me instead to use traditional terminology when referring to the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity, and to suggest alternative, non-gendered terms which convey similar relationality when divine relationality becomes the subject in focus. I will also from hereon increasingly use Cunningham’s phrase ‘The Three’<sup>34</sup> for the Trinity. This is because I think it helps the process of applying the doctrine of the Trinity to avoid over-use of a term that as yet still bears the stamp of the patriarchal politics that are now associated with the BOM-FOG analogues.

## DIVINE RELATIONS

### Divine Ontology

#### *Early history of the doctrine.*

The doctrine of the Trinity is shorthand for most Christian belief about God. The liturgical version describes One God in Three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It originated in the christological struggles of the first four centuries of Christianity, which will be summarised here because they form the backdrop to an understanding of the doctrine.

The doctrine was not arrived at easily, not least because it was not *explicit* in Scripture, and what it ‘means’ has been the source of debate for centuries<sup>35</sup>. Several of the earliest passages of New Covenant scripture (Matt 11:27; 24:36; 28:19; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:13; 2 Thess 2:13-14) suggest a special connection between God the Father and Jesus the Son, though in a way that falls short of claiming Jesus is equal with God. The concept of Father-Son equality seems to have been developed in later texts (e.g. John 10:30).

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<sup>31</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See Graham, 1996:147, and McCarthy, 1978.

<sup>33</sup> Holloway, 1997:xii.

<sup>34</sup> Cunningham, 1998.

<sup>35</sup> White, 1990:55.

This suggests a development in the Christian understanding of God over time, which continued after the canon was closed and is an early example of the kind of evolution in Christianity that has been an important spur to the work of theology ever since. The problem for the theologians of the day was how to integrate the fresh data of the specifically Christian revelation with the Jewish doctrine of God. At the birth of the Church the dividing line between the Church and paganism was the monotheism it had inherited, in which God was regarded as 'Father and creator'. How could this be integrated with the growing belief that Godself had been made known in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, and God's own Spirit had been poured out on the Church?

\*While the Church was struggling to understand what the 'Jesus event' meant for the Jewish God the outlines of a dyadic/triadic pattern for God were becoming more marked in the liturgy and day-to-day catechetical practice of the emerging Church. Yet Kelly says that the Apologists were all ardent monotheists, determined not to compromise the fundamental truth that God was One. For them truth '...was the Church's bulwark against pagan polytheism, Gnostic emanationism and Marcionite dualism'. Believing God to be essentially rational they looked to contemporary philosophy for help, and by the time they were writing 'the infiltration of secular thought' in their intellectual understanding of God is obvious.<sup>36</sup>

The impetus for the doctrine was originally a desire for an intellectually satisfying explanation of the relation of Christ to the Father. Irenaeus' 2<sup>nd</sup> century solution was to employ Philo's imagery of divine Logos for Christ - the use of λογος (*logos*) being 'undoubtedly a play on' the word for rationality, λογικος (p105<sup>37</sup>). Employing this Stoic concept enabled the Apologists to think of 'God the Father' as the one Godhead when considered as author of whatever exists, with the generation of the Logos dating from the 'Father's' emission for the purposes of creation, revelation and redemption. The *eternal* quality of the relationship of generation did not become the subject of orthodox interpretation until later.

The groundwork for orthodoxy with regard to the Christian doctrine of God was being done at this time. Kelly speaks of Athenagoras inveighing against labelling as atheists 'men who acknowledge God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit and declare both Their power in union and Their distinction in order' (p103). We may note that this 'order' was not intended to suggest degrees of subordination within the Godhead. Also the phrase, 'power in union' (see later discussion of Mary Grey's terminology). The relational and 'difference' implications of the doctrine were there from the start. Theophilus saw God as 'forever conversing with His Word' (p104), and Irenaeus brings out 'the fact that there are real distinctions in the immanent being of the unique, indivisible Father' (p108).

Hippolytus (martyred 235<sup>38</sup>) and Tertullian (ca. 160-220) approached the problem from opposite directions. Hippolytus declared that there is always a plurality in the

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<sup>36</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Kelly, 1977:105. From hereon in this chapter, all page references are to Kelly, 1977 (Chapter 4) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>38</sup> Farmer, 1997: 238.

Godhead, while Tertullian taught that Jesus' words in John 10:30 ('I and the Father are One') meant 'one in reality... not one person'. Nonetheless, they eventually arrived at similar concepts. Hippolytus spoke of Christ as 'another', but in doing so acknowledged that he was not speaking of two Gods, 'but as it were, light from light, water from its source, a ray from the sun'. That does not now sound so very different from Tertullian's claim that the distinction between The Three was a 'distinctio' or 'dispositio' (i.e. a distribution) not a 'separatio' – or separation (p112). This critique of the concept of separation will be seen to return later in this study in the theology of Mary Grey.

\*Third-century Trinitarian thought saw the emergence of conflicting tendencies (which provided the material for later controversies). It's **[no apostrophe of possession with "Its"]** development in the west consistently preferred to 'lean' on the side of a profound conviction of the Unity of God. This was an emphasis of which 'modalism in all its forms was a well-intentioned distortion' and in which subordinationism entered the catalogue of heresies (pp122,125,126).<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, in the east a more 'plural' approach was establishing itself (as well as being impregnated with Neo-Platonic ideas about the hierarchy of being). I suspect the contemporary growth of theological interest in the Trinity in the West has its roots in a need to recover something that was 'lost' in the early East-West 'split' in Christianity.

With reference to my present focus, evidence that the relationality of The Three was accepted early on is indicated by allegorical use of human relationships to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son. Origen held the view that Father and Son are 'two things in respect of Their Persons, but one in unanimity, harmony and identity of will'. He also appealed to scripture's declaration that 'man and wife, though distinct beings, can be one flesh, the righteous man and Christ can be one spirit, and Father and Son, though distinct, one God' (p129). The subsequent movement of thought up to the Council of Nicea (325) shows the conception of a plurality of divine persons existing in relationship with each other being imprinted on the apostolic tradition and popular faith. That Council, and the later Council of Constantinople (381) proved a watershed in the development of the doctrine, and its description in orthodox Christian Creeds.

### *The Creeds.*

The doctrine then went through the process of being encoded in a number of 'affirmations of faith'<sup>40</sup>, the most important being the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. These are reproduced in the Appendix at the end. The Apostles' Creed is the one in most common liturgical use.<sup>41</sup> The very simplest version of it in present-day liturgical use may be the following, authorised for use as an alternative creed in a Baptism service in The Methodist Worship Book (1999):

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<sup>41</sup> E.g. Book of Common Prayer, p267/268; The Methodist Worship Book, 1999:66/67; Common Worship Initiation Services, 1998:24/5.

“We believe in God the Father, who made the world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, his Son, Who redeemed humankind.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God.”<sup>42</sup>

\*The *Apostles’ Creed*, which according to a legend in Rufinus’ day (ca.345-410) had been composed by the 12 apostles, was promoted by Charlemagne in the western church (ca. 742-814). It has a simple tripartite scheme constructed around the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup> The *Nicene Creed* was hammered out at the first ecumenical council of Nicea in 325, convoked by Constantine to deal with the effects of Arius’ assertion that Jesus had not been co-eternal, but merely ‘the first among God’s creatures’.<sup>44</sup>

Most often the creed referred to as the Nicene Creed<sup>45</sup> is more precisely called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed because it was associated with the Council of Constantinople (381). It is the most commonly accepted creed among Christians and presupposes the original Nicene Creed but is more specific about the divinity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup> It was ‘intended to guard believers against the most prominent doctrinal errors that were current at the time when it was drawn up’.<sup>47</sup>

The most important thing about the Nicene Creed for the present enquiry is that it taught that Christ was in a ‘personal’ relationship to the Father – the “only-begotten” Son of the Father, and *homoousios* (Gr. “of the same being” or “consubstantial”) with the Father. In other words, the two Persons were consubstantial but not co-terminus, and the difference between their termini was the relationship of parent and child.

In this context it seems relevant to interject that before Nicea the Greek word for consubstantial (*homoousios*) meant ‘of generically the same substance’ rather than ‘of identical substance’, which was a later idea. Fortman writes (in 1972) that ‘in recent years there has grown a tendency to question and reject this [latter] assumption’.<sup>48</sup> I follow in this train of thought in that I seek later in this study to recover the idea of generation as fundamental to the meaning of the so-called divine ‘names’ of Father and Son. For this project this sort of relational consideration proves more useful than the Nicene focus on divine substance or essence.

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<sup>42</sup> The Methodist Worship Book, 1999:92.

<sup>43</sup> Book of Common Prayer, pp11/12 & 22/23; ASB, pp57/58,80 & 68.

<sup>44</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:18,50.

<sup>45</sup> Book of Common Prayer, p240; ASB, p123/124 & 181/182.

<sup>46</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:157.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel, 1889:458.

<sup>48</sup> Fortman, 1972:67.

*The Athanasian Creed*<sup>49</sup> was falsely attributed to St Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296-373) and probably originated in southern France in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> Its importance for later argument in this project lies in the fact that it ‘gives prominence to the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity’; the ‘differentia’ of the Three Persons and the co-equality of the Three Persons. Also in that it teaches us ‘to distinguish the Three but not divide them’ and ‘to recognise the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, and yet to hold their co-eternity and co-equality with the Father’.<sup>51</sup>

The subtle developments in Trinitarian theology seen in these creeds further invite us to continue the process of re-imagining Trinity to reflect what Christians believe.

### *Perichoresis and Hypostatic Personhood.*

Perichoresis is a technical term, or kind of shorthand probably derived from περιχωρεω (*perichoreo*), meaning to go or come around from a combination of the Greek words χωρεω (*choreo*) and περι (*peri*). It refers to the permanently interpenetrative ‘going around’ in which The Three co-exist. Aland defines the verb χωρεω, when used in its transitive form in the New Testament, as also conveying the idea of ‘making room for’ or ‘having room for’ (in 2 Cor 7.2); accepting or practising (the celibate life); holding and containing (in Jn 2.6:21;25). He defines the preposition περι as ‘about’, ‘concerning’, ‘of’, ‘with reference to’ or alternatively ‘for’ or ‘on account of’ in its general form.<sup>52</sup> These ideas give the flavour of The Threes’ perpetual movement and participation in the One God and in each other. They contribute to a working definition of Trinitarian perichoresis as ‘the reciprocal presence and interpenetration or coinherence of the three persons of the Trinity’.<sup>53</sup>

Perichoresis is therefore to be understood as the process that enables the One-ness and the Three-ness of God to be presented as equivalent in the early creeds, and introduces us to the ultimate mystery of a God Who is not reducible to rational - or even irrational - theological description. Because of perichoresis the eternal similarity of The Three is thought to be so complete that any ‘essential’ epithet applied to one of them could be appropriated to each of the others. This means, for example, that while *Jesus* is described as ‘the truth’ in John 14:6, Julian of Norwich may also speak of ‘the truth which is the *Father* seeing God who is the Son, the wisdom which is the Son beholding God who is the Father’.<sup>54</sup> Because of perichoresis the eternal differences of the Three are thought to be so complete that they are known in terms of

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<sup>49</sup> Book of Common Prayer, p27/28.

<sup>50</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:50.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel, 1889:459/460 (italics original).

<sup>52</sup> Aland et al (eds.), 1998: 200,139; see Dobson, 1992:100.

<sup>53</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:180

<sup>54</sup> Colledge and Walsh: 64, italics mine.

permanent, non-transferable relations. In other words, the ‘Personhood’ of each of The Three is derived ‘*from the relationships they sustain one with another*’.<sup>55</sup>

However, as has already been noted, in the description of The Three hammered out at Nicea, the One-ness and Three-ness of God were ‘explained’ in terms of the concept of substance, and which later led Aquinas to define the relationships of The Three as ‘subsistent relationships’.<sup>56</sup> Two words were used to denote substance. The One-ness of God was spoken of in terms of οὐσία (*ousia*) or ‘essence’, and the Three-ness of God in terms of hypostasis, or ‘specific individuality’.<sup>57</sup>

A hypostasis was the substantial nature or reality of something and the word was commonly equated with ‘thing’.<sup>58</sup> The letter to the Hebrews speaks of a ‘Son...[Who]...reflects the very stamp’ of God’s reality, using the word υποστασεως (*hypostaseos*).<sup>59</sup> The term combines υπο, meaning ‘under’, with στασεως, referring (among other things) to a ‘standing’ or ‘existence’.<sup>60</sup> The impression conveyed is one of ‘underlying substance, in the sense of being opposite to attributes or to what is unsubstantial’.<sup>61</sup>

As a term, hypostasis denoted what unites The Three, in contrast to the term *prosopon*, which had the subtly different meaning of describing what in God is Three.<sup>62</sup> *Prosopon* was the term employed by Hippolytus to signify the otherness or separate subsistences of the Son and the Father, but it had some disadvantages. It was the word of choice being used by the modalists, and it ‘created problems in christological and Trinitarian controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries, when it came to mean ‘concrete, individual reality’ or ‘distinct personal existence’.<sup>63</sup>

When Tertullian translated the early doctrine into Latin he used the word ‘persona’, which was a word with the connotation of the mask of an actor (rather than the modern idea of self-consciousness which we associate with the notion of ‘person’).<sup>64</sup> Thus the Latins came to say that in God there was one *substantia* and three *personae* – one substance and three Persons. Whereas hypostasis had affirmed the objectivity of The Three, their ‘personae’ now tended to affirm their subjectivity.

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<sup>55</sup> Boff:80, italics mine.

<sup>56</sup> Boff, 1988:57.

<sup>57</sup> Boff, 1988:60.

<sup>58</sup> Boff, 1988:61.

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 1:2,3, RSV; Aland et al (Eds.), 1998.

<sup>60</sup> Dobson, 1992:186; Aland et al:166.

<sup>61</sup> Sykes (Ed), 1982:491.

<sup>62</sup> Boff, 1988:59.

<sup>63</sup> O’Collins and Farrugia, 1991:98.

<sup>64</sup> Kelly, 1977:122,112.

I find it intriguing that the idea of the ‘personal’ is not absent from either concept. In the case of the word ‘hypostasis’ this becomes clearer in Boff’s description of a hypostasis as ‘the essential personality of a substance’.<sup>65</sup> In any case, the introduction of the concept of personality immediately implies something relational about the three hypostases in the One God, because it implies the presence of an ‘other’ or ‘others’ in a relationship as the means of its discovery or revelation.

I submit that the theological concepts of perichoresis and hypostatic personhood provide us with an image of God as a dynamic interacting (or ‘communing’) of essentially similar personalities that differ in some attribute that allows them to be regarded as ‘personal’. The perichoretic relationship between The Three does not lose sight of the One’s Threeness because the *distinctness* of the Personhood of each one of The Three is not found in separation from the others but rather in its unique set of relationships *with* the others.

As has already been noted the uniqueness of each of the Three is marked by the use of the analogues by which they are most well known, namely, Father, Son and Spirit. These words are not ‘names’ in the strict sense, but descriptions of relationship. Their use reveals The Three as three mutual relationships in one God. However, relationships are not generally understood to be ‘substantial’ or ‘essential’ though these terms might be applied to the general relationality of those participating in relationships. As John Heywood Thomas puts it, we can distinguish the relations in the Trinity from the property of having relations, which belongs to all three relations.<sup>66</sup> Within this shared relationality the Person in God known as the Father is defined in terms of the activity of generation, the Son in terms of being generated, and the Spirit in terms of a procession out of God that arises from the being together of the other two.<sup>67</sup>

Bearing in mind my earlier critique of language I suggest the foregoing definitions make it possible to speak of The Three as Generator, Generated One and Spirit - Three Persons in One Godde. This terminology makes the fact of divine gender-inclusivity explicit, and hence might serve contemporary Western society better than the traditional formulations of the Creed without losing the essence of the creedal formulations. These terms do, of course, require us to adopt a Christology in which the essential feature of the Son is taken to be his humanity rather than his masculinity<sup>68</sup>. Such an understanding is already implicit in the choice of the words used in the original formulations. In them, the word used for Christ was *ανθρωπος* (*anthropos*), meaning ‘man’ or ‘human’ not *ανηρ* (*aner*), meaning ‘a man’ or ‘an husband’<sup>69</sup> and the (Latin) claim that God became *homo*, not *vir* (i.e. human, not a

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<sup>65</sup> See Boff: 134ff.

<sup>66</sup> Schwöbel (Ed), 1995:21.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Boff’s suggestion that the Filioque is only truly acceptable when accompanied by the Spiritique and the Patreque (Boff:202).

<sup>68</sup> See discussion in Ruether, 1983.

<sup>69</sup> Dobson, 1992:3,81.



man). In my opinion the suggested terms adequately represent the creedal formulations because they address the relational personalities of the Three *without* losing the sense that they are both existing and locatable *and* existing but not locatable.

### The Trinity as The Core of Our Desire.

#### *Introduction to Mary Grey.*

\*The following is a brief introduction to Mary Grey, her methodology, style, and to the themes that run through her published works, including her theology of God.

Mary Grey is an English Roman Catholic who has studied and worked in the Netherlands and Belgium and as Professor of Theology at Southampton University. Her first degree was in Literae Humaniores at Oxford and her use of ancient myths to illustrate her ideas has become almost a hallmark of her work. She is what I would call an existentialist<sup>70</sup> feminist theologian working with orthodox Christian themes.

The way I have set about the present enquiry has been influenced by Grey's methodology, which is 'dialogical', and which has influenced the theological method I have opted to use in the present enquiry. Grey argues for a 'dialogical' methodology in an article which she tells me she 'personally sets some significance by'<sup>71</sup> and which is entitled, 'Is dialogue a necessary presupposition for the discovery of truth?'.<sup>72</sup>

\*Grey's style is flowing, imaginative and eclectic. It is very dependent on words, yet her use of words has the tenor of a struggle, as she links them together in unwieldy combinations such as 'cosmic-justice-making', and 'mutuality-in-relation' and sometimes seems to 'throw' them at the page.<sup>73</sup> It is as if Grey continually finds words inadequate as a means of communication.<sup>74</sup>

Grey deals in '*Christian Feminist Theology*' and claims it is 'inspired by *memory* and *vision*' (italics hers).<sup>75</sup> It is therefore perhaps not surprising that in her feminist theology she is frequently found employing words like re-claiming and re-sourcing, re-examining, redeeming, re-weaving and relating. This is because she understands the task of theology to be that of re-claiming and re-sourcing 'the living waters of tradition'<sup>76</sup> which is often 're-examined'<sup>77</sup> in her work (e.g. her re-examination of the

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<sup>71</sup> This is stated in a letter to me dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 1994.

<sup>72</sup> Grey, 1992.

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<sup>74</sup> Grey, 1991b:17.

<sup>75</sup> Grey, 1991d:29.

<sup>76</sup> Grey, 1993d:49 and 1983.

tradition of Mary<sup>78</sup>). She is found talking about ‘Redeeming the Dream’ of Redemption and Atonement from a basis of her belief that the whole enterprise of feminist theology is about Redemption and reclaiming what is lost.<sup>79</sup> She is concerned to recover the contribution women have made to mission theology.<sup>80</sup> She is found claiming that ‘Feminist method is at home with the metaphors of unravelling and re-weaving’<sup>81</sup>, and urging us to ‘re-weave the patterns of our relating’.<sup>82</sup> In one of her articles she claims to build on American feminist theologian Carter Heyward’s ‘relational theology’<sup>83</sup> and in the article which came under particular scrutiny for this project she developed the theme of God as ‘power-in-relation’.<sup>84</sup>

The most important aspect of her work for this thesis is her focus on relationality. She is concerned that Christians re-connect with what she calls ‘mutuality-in-relation’ using ‘connected knowing’ as an antidote to what she describes as the oppressive forms of logic that Christians have inherited from their tradition.<sup>85</sup> In her book, The Wisdom of Fools Grey presents our present culture as balanced between two ways of interpreting the world. The first she describes as ‘logocentric’, profit-based, dualistic and competitive. The second she describes as non-dualistic, non-competitive, ecological and relational. She characterises the first approach as Logos and the second as Sophia, and they engage in dialogue with each other. The hero of the book is called Perceval, who is styled as a Court Fool who is seeking to discover the question that will unlock the meaning of life. He is aware that, in the words of Romans 8:22, ‘nature is groaning for redemption’, and the planet is dying. In the end he discovers that his own Christian faith is part of the problem and becomes depressed. Hope revives when, sitting by the Chalice Well at Glastonbury, like Jesus did by a well in Samaria, a woman performs a simple act of kindness and gives him a drink of water.<sup>86</sup> This kind of ultimate appeal to the wordless *action* rather than the problematic *word* is one of the features that makes Grey’s theology so attractive to a search for a pragmatic model of human care.

*Grey’s model of Trinity.*

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<sup>77</sup> Grey, 1993d:43.

<sup>78</sup> Grey, 1989a:334.

<sup>79</sup> Grey, 1989b.

<sup>80</sup> Grey, 1991e:202.

<sup>81</sup> Grey, 1993d:46.

<sup>82</sup> Grey, 1991f:371.

<sup>83</sup> Grey defines this as a focus on a just manner of relating.

<sup>84</sup> Grey, 1991c:105.

<sup>85</sup> Grey, 1992b:156,154.

<sup>86</sup> Grey, 1993f.

Grey's model of Trinity is described in her article, 'The Core of Our Desire', published in 1991. One of the reasons why I became interested in using it for this research was because it is a contemporary model, and another because it treats the Trinity as a feminist symbol. With regard to the latter, Grey argues that feminist spirituality is intrinsic to the symbol of the Trinity.<sup>87</sup> This felt important if I was to use the doctrine as a 'pattern' for a pastoral care, in line with my desire to arrive at an 'adequately feminist' as well as contemporary paradigm.

Grey makes particular appeal to the previously mentioned emphasis on relationality in all her work – the idea of development, growth and the 'relational self'. Her point is that we are all, including God, multi-dimensional and 'relational'. That it is *separation* that needs explanation rather than empathy and connection.<sup>88</sup> The 'feminist' connotation of this observation seems to derive less from its liberationist perspective than from the fact that in contemporary theology the attribute of the relationality of God is rarely appealed to outside the discipline of feminist theology.<sup>89</sup>

Grey continues to use the traditional male analogues for the Three, though it is clear she is not unaware of the ways in which terminology may pose a problem. She reverts to Ruether's term<sup>90</sup> 'God/ess' for God towards the end of the article, pointing out that God/ess is clearly revealed as the 'core of our desire' for women.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore S/he (i.e. God/ess) is also the object of women's *encounter*, for S/he can be encountered in 'our deep sense of connected knowing, the deep wisdom of God, the depths of our relational being'.<sup>92</sup>

Grey appears to take a non-hierarchical interpretation of The Three for granted. She points to the notion of 'connected subjectivity' in what could be called a *psychoanalytic* model of personhood, in an effort to provide a 'new' philosophical starting-point for discussion of both the human and the divine. She talks of a 'feminist process concept of relationality offer[ing] the concept of "the relational self", or "many selves" held together in fluid unity'.<sup>93</sup> She feels that herein lies a way of releasing or liberating transcendent human subjectivity from its interpretation as 'other than self'. From being seen as something separated from that with which 'immanence' is usually identified. In doing this she is seeking to counteract the history of damaging psychological relations within the Trinity<sup>94</sup> that has promoted models of subordination in human relationships.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Grey, 1991f:371.

<sup>88</sup> Grey, 1991f:367.

<sup>89</sup> For example, it does not feature in Pink's long list of the 'Attributes of God' despite the list including the 'Solitariness of God' (Pink, 1975).

<sup>90</sup> Ruether, 1983.

<sup>91</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Grey, 1991f: 371.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Grey, 1991f: 368.

<sup>95</sup> I am indebted here to Hilton, 1996:59.

In her efforts to describe a ‘new theological starting-point’ Grey is found proposing that Judeo-Christian faith sources should be viewed as undervaluing immanence. Primeval chaos ought to be re-imaged, not as a formless immanence resisting creativity, form and rationality but as a relational integrity with a ‘rich, many-layered interiority’ for which the process of divine creation is one of invitation – or ‘“lure” towards new patterns of connection’.<sup>96</sup> She further claims that if one images the Godhead as Father, the Father-Son relationship becomes the dominant unit within the Trinity. When the Father/Son unity is stressed it becomes ‘the vertical oneness of *separative transcendental subjectivity*’. This, she says, is a relatively recent ideological construct that becomes striking in ‘post-Tridentine, Barthian theology’, which sits in sharp contrast with the ‘connective, organic’ New Testament images of Christ the Vine, the communal Body of Christ, and Christ identified with the poor and suffering.<sup>97</sup>

Most Christology that sits within this ideological approach locks Jesus into this ‘vertical’ form of transcendence, and ‘imprisons’ incarnational language in a struggle to maintain the emphasis on separation that is the hallmark of ‘separative transcendental subjectivity’. This obtains even to the extent of making spatial imagery appear to be intrinsically linked with incarnation (e.g. ‘He came down from Heaven...’ in the Nicene Creed).<sup>98</sup> As a result of this there is a felt need to require separation between God and humanity, which Grey holds prevents us from ‘re-imagining transcendence through a multi-dimensional richness of human bonding’, and from re-conceiving the relationship of transcendence to immanence. Grey suggests we do the latter by regarding Jesus’ bonding with all those significant people around him as... ‘the very source of the unique profundity of his relationship with God’.<sup>99</sup>

### Commentary

#### *Theological critique.*

\*One of the first questions to ask of Grey’s model is ‘*Is it adequately Trinitarian?*’, by which I mean, ‘Does it avoid heresy?’. As pointed to in the section above describing the early history of the doctrine, there are at least two well-rehearsed theological dangers this applies to – description which starts (only) from the basis of God’s ‘monarchical’ unity, and runs the risk of modalism; and description which starts (only) from a view of God as essentially Three, which can be Tri-theistic and runs the risk of subordinationism. To these potential problems I would add a third.... description that fails to understand the names Father, Son and Spirit applied to the Trinity as analogues depicting relationship rather than substance, and thereby runs the risk of sexism.<sup>100</sup> Grey shows herself keen to avoid all three. Rather than weight the

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<sup>96</sup> Grey, 1991f: 369.

<sup>97</sup> Grey, 1991f:368.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Grey, 1991f: 369.

Three over against the One, or vice versa, or present God in terms that pose the sexes as sufficiently 'opposite' for gendered 'meaning' to be introduced, Grey seeks to negate distortions by refusing the most fundamental of ideological dualisms, that of transcendence versus immanence.

This leads me to ask, *Can Grey's critique of the immanence-transcendence dualism be upheld theologically?* I think it can, but only provided it is understood that Grey is not proposing we *collapse* them into each other. Provided she is disputing the dualism without portraying either immanence or transcendence as needing to give way to the other, or suggesting we negate them both. This is, in effect, what Grey is saying, because she does not understand connection as necessitating a merger. She is merely seeking a holistic approach which allows both concepts to be seen in 'both...and' terms rather than 'either...or' terms. I think the 'both...and' approach is particularly valuable for the purpose of applying theology, whereas the 'either...or' approach has its uses in theoretical theological discourse. In other words, I would argue for the validity of both attitudes, according to context.

Dualisms might be thought of as 'too-simplistic' representations of reality, having a 'word power' in the postmodern sense capable of producing distortions in the way we think. What is innovative about Grey's approach is that it applies a liberationist hermeneutic to what we now know about the influence of Greek philosophy on early Christianity. This leads me to view Grey's thesis as orthodox. As an effort to refuse distortions created by, or accretions that have been clinging to, the language used to communicate the doctrine of the Trinity *without* losing the doctrine's power to communicate the Christian faith.

'External' support for this position may be seen in the increasingly accepted Rahnerian claim that the 'immanent' trinity and the 'economic' trinity are one and the same<sup>101</sup>, and in conventional Christology and Pneumatology. In the latter the Spirit is seen as 'proceeding from' or 'spilling out' of Godde into Creation.<sup>102</sup> For the Spirit to be capable of leaving Godde completely we would need to deny the possibility for it to participate *fully* in the perichoretic relationship. A truly perichoretic action would require the Spirit to fully bear all of the Three in that relation of 'proceeding from', or 'spilling out' beyond the boundaries of what is *only* Godde into what is created - blurring any distinction we might wish to make between Creator and created. In the former, the Generated One is regarded as both fully human and fully divine, without separation. This has the effect of drawing flesh and blood - that which we think of as created - 'back' into the Creator in a sense that breaks down the barrier between the two. All in all, the process of re-imaging Trinity in terms of a combined subjective and objective may be thought of as no less Trinitarian a theological 'project' than describing the Generated One as a totally combined divine and human being.

Yet another question might be, *Is the pronounced equality between divine Persons in Grey's model acceptable?* Grey appears to adopt what I regard as a common misconception in popular feminist theology - that a hierarchical interpretation of the Trinity is necessarily patriarchal. To quote from a recent discussion on an Internet

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<sup>101</sup> Schwöbel, 1995:7.

<sup>102</sup> cf. the Nicene Creed, ASB, 1980:181/2.

mailbase – it is often thought that there are ‘two models [of how we] control how we view the world, the patriarchal and the egalitarian’<sup>103</sup>, which implies hierarchy is necessarily patriarchal. I think a lot depends on what is being intended in the use of both words. For the present purpose I propose to define hierarchy as referring to a structured difference in the exercise of authority, rather than to ‘exercising power over others’, which is the problem with patriarchy. If we understand hierarchy in terms of systems of practical deference without investing these relations with connotations of disempowerment or coercive obligation then we will no longer assume autonomies that are alien to an ‘co-equivalent’ model of Trinity. With this understood, if I am prepared to view the ‘either...or’ approach to immanence and transcendence as having merit in some circumstances then I must also be prepared to appreciate the value of hierarchy in some circumstances.

I feel the question stems from re-visiting one of the ideas that the Athanasian Creed addressed, which was that filiation and procession bestow subordination, which is not a logical conclusion. The Athanasian Creed holds that ‘none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal’.<sup>104</sup> I also feel Hippolytus’ choice of the indistinguishable ‘Light from Light’ as a means of describing the relationship between the Father and the Son begins to solve the question of how hierarchy and equality can live together.

### *Hierarchy, Equality and Patriarchy.*

A further consideration of the question of the politics of God leads me to point to the popular view that the First Person of the Three is to be regarded as uniquely equivalent to the God-head, which Grey’s article takes to task.<sup>105</sup> This view is, however, the obvious interpretation of the phrase in the Nicene creed which speaks of ‘...the Father, By whom all things are made’. Apparently ‘the stress on equality [of the Persons]... was never understood as detracting from a certain primacy of the Father’ in history.<sup>106</sup> If this statement has the appearance of an oxymoron, I suggest the reason is the contemporary predilection for ‘images’ – for ‘fixing’ truth, including the truth of God, rather than allowing change. For preferring to deal in words about God rather than relationship with a relational God. To put this in yet more words - for dealing in ‘facts’ rather than processes.

So in what way could The Three be both equal and hierarchical? I suggest that the difference lies in the purpose for which they are anything. For example, it does seem unlikely that, given the emphases of the Athanasian Creed, the earlier formulations of the doctrine intended it to exclude the Son and Spirit from the activity of creation. A consubstantial nature implies an equally shared ‘principle’ of creativity. Hierarchy is found to take the shape of patriarchy when the view that the Father is the unique

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<sup>103</sup> Taken from an Email posting to [feminist-theology@mailbase.ac.uk](mailto:feminist-theology@mailbase.ac.uk) from Mary W. Matthews on 26/3/99, at 20:56 and 20:57, entitled ‘Can Women be Ordained? – part I and part II’, with permission from the author.

<sup>104</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>105</sup> Grey, 1991f: 368.

<sup>106</sup> \*Creed, Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopaedia.

Source of all is held in an essentialist manner. Described by Boff as 'trinitarian monotheism' this view has produced a 'pyramidal model of the church',<sup>107</sup> in the context of the partiality of the philosophical ideologies that have been informing the Church as to the nature of the 'real' since the inception of Christianity. That does not mean these ideologies are immutable. It needs to be increasingly realised that the use of the apparently patriarchal analogue of 'Father' rather than 'Mother' for the First Person of The Three is consonant with scientific understanding right up until the turn of the present century. Until then it was thought that men supplied the generative 'seed' and women supplied only the womb-container in the process of procreation.

It follows from the above that 'an egalitarian understanding of Trinity such as Grey's is not necessarily more quintessentially 'feminist' than a hierarchical understanding might be, nor vice versa'.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, it needs to be admitted that the *experience* of hierarchy is too often one of patriarchal domination, and that the idea of domination is generally associated with the word. I have already suggested one possible way forward with regard to redeeming the concept of hierarchy. This is to re-image the Father in terms of 'Generator'. This, at least, would make it easier to refute the suggestion that the appearance of divine inter-Personal hierarchy in God is inconsistent with a feminist liberationist politics. There are also obvious corollaries with regard to social organisation.

In the end I regard the tensions we may experience between the concepts of equality and hierarchy in God as being useful. They have their roots in the way orthodox Christology permanently impinges upon and 'destabilises' Trinitarian theology, by introducing the 'fully human' into the divine. However, I propose that they are only actually experienced in tension where the struggle is not for clarity of thought so much as for some way of maintaining (perhaps we should say 'hanging onto'?) the 'separative divine transcendence' that Grey disputes.

It seems possible to me that it is the maintenance of a focus on separation rather than the use of masculine analogues for God that is the factor that ultimately undergirds patriarchal politics in Christian cultures. Also that this is a precursor of the individualism of contemporary Western culture.<sup>109</sup> Commenting on the content of chapter Three in a 1990 ACCM appraisal of colleges and courses Greenwood notes that in some cases the 'trinitarian stances' employed in the courses 'reinforce hierarchy and individualism' in the students.<sup>110</sup> It seems clear in this context that hierarchy is being thought of in terms of domination and subservience. A 'trinitarian stance' after the pattern of Grey's model would locate the authority in any system in the combined will of equal subjects who find themselves caught up in the system in some way. My critique of this would stay with the idea that equality is seen as foundational to authority, but add the rider that this authority may be implemented hierarchically.

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<sup>107</sup> Boff, 1988:21.

<sup>108</sup> Hilton, 1996, p11.

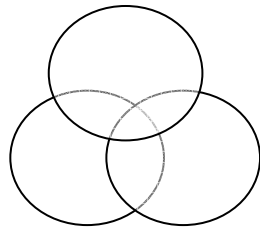
<sup>109</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Greenwood, 1997:69.

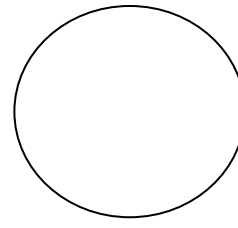
### *Epistemological critique*

Earlier in this study I mentioned briefly how ‘Trinitarian’ the feminist standpoint position of Elizabeth Grosz sounded to my ears when I first encountered it. If, conversely, I now seek to use Grosz’s epistemology as a yardstick with which to assess Divine ontology as here described I find I see the likeness in reverse.

This can be shown diagrammatically. The process of perichoresis can be understood as preventing the One-ness and the Three-ness of God from being mutually exclusive, which means one could never validly represent The Three as entirely separate. There would always need to be some sort of overlap, as suggested in **Fig. 4**. It would, in fact, enable a co-terminus representation of the Three with regard to the consideration of shared substance (such as shared ‘relationality’) as in **Fig. 5**.

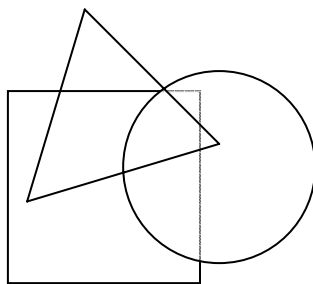


**Fig. 4**



**Fig. 5**

So far, neither of these representations mirror my chosen epistemology concerning ‘material truths [that] differ, overlap, and are not co-terminus’<sup>111</sup> (reference Fig.1). However, when we shift the focus away from the substantial language that dominates the Creeds, and instead focus on the interrelationships that indicate the hypostatic personhood of the Three we find they can be represented two-dimensionally, as in **Fig. 6**.



**Fig 6. Diagrammatic representation of the interrelationships of the Three.**

Comparing this with Fig .1 allows me to claim that a relational model of the Three satisfies a postmodern epistemological critique. This shift to understand The Three in relational terms is important to my thesis in that it provides me with a Unity in terms of relationship that is not dependent upon co-terminosity in God as well as within the

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<sup>111</sup> This refers again to the Grosz’s epistemology as described by Stanley, 1990 (see above).



boundaries of a pastoral care relationship. This helps validate a unitary concept of pastoral care that does not specify the nature of the plurality of persons involved in it.

One further epistemological comment concerns the way the ‘feminist process theism’ seen in Grey’s model is found to be in dispute with the ‘predominant individualist structure of western philosophy’.<sup>112</sup> Having begun with the ‘basic insight of feminist studies ... that women often describe their experience using the terms relatedness and interconnection’, Grey ends up arguing for a ‘metaphysic of connection’ as an ‘alternative model to that of individualism’.<sup>113</sup>

The epistemological base for individualism is presented in some of Grey’s work as ‘logocentric thinking’. It is a way of thinking criticised in feminist theology that is currently building upon Grey’s work.<sup>114</sup> It is a form of rationality that fails to appreciate the connectedness of reality, and consistently confines reality to that which is known and/or can be spoken of. It undergirds dualistic analysis and fails to allow ontologically different ‘material truths’ to ‘overlap’. In other words, its’ root problem is that it is not ‘truly’ postmodern, or ‘postmodern enough’. Both logocentric thinking and individualism are tempered by the idea of the ‘overlapping’ of truths in much the same way as by the idea of ‘connected knowing’ that is proposed in Grey’s metaphysic of connection. They are also both countered by the ‘listening logic’ Grey proposes as a means of arriving at other ways of knowing such as those ‘issuing from Christian Feminist base communities’.<sup>115</sup>

It would be interesting to discover whether this epistemological slant on Grey’s metaphysic of connection could only resonate in a culture already impregnated with a Trinitarian theology of God. In other words, to investigate the degree to which a culture’s epistemology and theology of God are related. For the situated purpose of this study what is important is that it takes us beyond the simple species-resemblance of the perichoretic model in Fig. 6. It opens up the door for a ‘unitary’ model of pastoral care that will prefer connection of different planes of material reality over the uni-valency of description in terms of either non-essential or essential categories. As will be seen, this later gives me scope for what might be called a multi-dimensional paradigm of care.

#### *Methodological considerations.*

I have laboured the foregoing commentary on Grey’s model because it seemed necessary to argue the applicability of a divine template to questions of human relationship. Also because Grey’s challenge to a non-transferable transcendent-immanent split in which Divine equals transcendent and Human equals immanent supports my intention to examine the Trinitarian picture of divine relations for the purposes of building a picture of human relations that echoes them.

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<sup>112</sup> Grey, 1990:369.

<sup>113</sup> Grey, 1991:7.

<sup>114</sup> E.g., Annelies van Heijst, ‘Beyond Diving Thinking’ (1994, unpublished).

<sup>115</sup> Grey, 1992:155.

Grey's rebuttal of a 'separative transcendental subjectivity' also supports other aspects of this project. The idea of connection without merger is methodologically helpful with regard to the task of delineating theological boundaries. It also encourages the correlative method of doing theology and supports my proposal to correlate divine and human relating in a dialogical way. In the process it hints at what might be thought of as a kind of 'dialogical authority' in theological method.

#### *A note of caution...*

With regard to the process of arriving at a paradigm for pastoral care, a note of caution needs to be introduced at this point. The foregoing arguments require us to refuse to view what is divine and what is human through separate lenses, and to examine anthropology as well as theology for clues about divinity, and divinity as well as anthropology for clues about humanity. They lead us to approve Grey's theological use of psychotherapeutic insights, and, I submit, would approve a psychotherapeutic use of theological insights. They suggest the relevance of Grey's theology of God to any search for a more authentic understanding of what it is to be truly human, without which any paradigm for a human relationship must be suspect. However, it would be reasonable to doubt these findings on the grounds that the 'Persons' whose divine relating I wish to examine are hypostaseis, and not humans. In other words that they are too dissimilar from human persons for the attributes of their relations to be relevant to human relations. This introduces an important note of caution and provisionality into my use of Trinitarian relations as a model for a human relationship unless human personhood that can only be offset by demonstrating that human personhood can be conceived of as at least partially analogous to Divine Personhood.

This is where the influence of the traditional Christian doctrine of human Creation in God's image<sup>116</sup> on my work needs to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, even without this influence I feel the foregoing discussion is heuristic of an anthropological enquiry into the extent to which I may appeal to the intra-personal relations of Godde as paradigmatic for pastoral inter-personal care. To answer the question: Is there any evidence that human personhood can also be regarded as 'hypostatic'?

## HUMAN RELATIONS.

### Human Ontology

#### *Anthropology.*

Grey's critique of the concept of a separative transcendental subjectivity enables us to re-image The Three as both a Self and selves in a way that does not require a separation between subjectivity and objectivity. It is therefore relevant to note that this is what some contemporary anthropologies are saying about the nature of human being. The caution expressed above is less of a problem when one holds a socio-

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<sup>116</sup> Genesis 1:27.

psychoanalytic anthropology. I will briefly examine two contemporary theories of 'personhood' in support of this claim - one socio-political and one psychotherapeutic.

The first is described in Alistair McFadyen's book, 'The Call to Personhood'<sup>117</sup>, and is evidence of a drift in social anthropology towards an understanding of a 'person' in terms of their social location. The principal theme of the book is a description of personal identity as centering on one's place in what he describes as the social matrix, which is a kind of sedimentation of one's ongoing experience of social relations. To put this more simply, human personhood is being seen as a product of one's relationality rather than one's individuality. This is a useful variation on what Comblin describes in his 'Christian anthropology' as a more general move to re-affirm 'personalism', or the sense of 'individual in community', in pastoral theology.<sup>118</sup>

If we accept that *God* is essentially relational McFadyen's thesis unknowingly supports the doctrinal contention that human beings are created in God's image. This, in turn, supports the premise that the Divine Image can be mined for clues as to what will enable true humanity. It also supports the idea that true humanity will be promoted when a human relationship is 'created in the image' of intra-divine relationship. All of which leads me to propose that a Trinitarian pastoral relationship will foster a truly human 'personhood'.

The contribution of a psychotherapeutic understanding of personhood is equally intriguing. Stock-Whittaker<sup>119</sup> has shaped insights from the two main schools of thought in British group analysis/psychotherapy (i.e., Foulkes and Bion)<sup>120</sup> into a practical therapy that is growing in popularity, and which takes a psychotherapeutic anthropology as axiomatic. Her psychotherapeutic approach to personhood works from a model of a person as composed of 'parts' which can become split off, transferred, or 'projected' out of oneself onto another or others. She finds ways of using this understanding therapeutically in the search for a greater 'wholeness' on the basis of observation that in the case of groups where participants are removed from their social locations the dislocation of these 'parts' becomes more obvious. This understanding of personhood sounds suspiciously like the idea of Godhood being made up of a plurality of 'parts' that remain, become 'transferred', or process 'out' of the Self.

\*A particularly dramatic contribution to the discussion lies in the group analytic understanding of 'projective identification'. This process is said to be occurring when an emotional experience that one person has but doesn't **[write in full]** want is projected out of themselves onto another or others. At which point, provided the other(s) accept the projection – which they are often not skilled enough to resist doing - they end up experiencing the emotion as if it was their own. In other words, they

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<sup>117</sup> McFadyen, 1990.

<sup>118</sup> Comblin, 1990:117

<sup>119</sup> Stock-Whittaker, 1985.

<sup>120</sup>

‘identify’ with the projection, and it affects their own behaviour. When the feeling is examined under professionally controlled conditions it presents as irrational and often uncharacteristic and can be traced back to the one projecting it, who can then be invited to ‘reclaim’ it and deal with it if they need to.<sup>121</sup> In general our knowledge of this process suggests that human persons may live a less separate existence than is generally imagined, and that there is a limited sense in which human beings also experience a kind of perichoresis.

*\*Ecclesiology.*

The nature of human relationality undergirds the study of ecclesiology, so it is relevant to note that the concept of human hypostatic personhood is increasingly found informing contemporary ecclesiology, such as that of Zizioulas, who is particularly concerned with finding ways of being church that do not involve domination.<sup>122</sup> Commenting on Zizioulas’ approach in the context of a discussion of the impact a relational theology has on ecclesiology Greenwood claims that,

‘Indispensable to understanding the work of Zizioulas are an awareness of two ‘patristic keys’: (a) There is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as an individual conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category; and (b) Communion which does not come from a ‘hypostasis’, a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to ‘hypostases’, concrete and free persons, is not an ‘image’ of the being of God. ....a triune God whose inner life may be expressed in terms of perichoretic being, implies a Church in which there are no permanent structure of subordination but rather, overlapping patterns of mutual relationship.’<sup>123</sup>

This not only accepts the appropriateness of ‘translating’ Trinitarian theology into the arena of human relations, but also suggests a new definition of a hypostasis – as a ‘concrete and free person’. If we are disposed to think this possible of humans then human and divine ‘persons’ cannot be so very different.

I will now proceed by examining the nature of pastoral relationships.

*Pastoral counselling.*

\*Within the plethora of what Clinebell calls the basic types of pastoral care and counselling the thing that stands out is the ‘crucial importance of pastoral counselling’ to pastoral care<sup>124</sup>. Although much practical *theology* is currently at pains to ‘shift paradigms’ and widen the original scope of the discipline from its former narrow focus on the one-to-one counsel offered by a pastor, the paradigm that is emerging

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<sup>121</sup> Bion, 1961:8,149,177.

<sup>122</sup> Zizioulas, 1985:18.

<sup>123</sup> Greenwood, 1994: 88.

<sup>124</sup> Clinebell, 1984 (1966): 46.

does not lose interest in this basic theme.<sup>125</sup> The search for the means to include more than previously in the definition of pastoral care is merely being carried further, so that pastoral care and counselling will be more useful to all.<sup>126</sup> If anything, the search is for ways of honing pastoral counselling into a more worthy tool, through looking for more comprehensive ways of applying a praxis-based hermeneutic – a groundedness in human experience – to the subject. In other words, for ways of taking inter-personal relationships and the need for quality and authenticity in pastoral counselling even more seriously. So it is appropriate to examine a contemporary model of pastoral counselling for what it offers my thesis concerning pastoral care in general. For the present purpose I will be treating pastoral counselling as a kind of ‘ambassador’ or representative of pastoral care as a whole.

\*I feel Rod Burton’s recent description of pastoral counselling can be thought of in these terms. He presents a case for ‘reframing’ pastoral counselling in terms of ‘therapeutic spiritual direction’.<sup>127</sup> He defines pastoral counselling in current practice as utilising a collaborative relationship. This is a relationship that is ‘established between counsellor and counsellee to help people take responsibility for their lives in the present moment [and] make realistic and creative choices in respect of their immediate situation, and thus aims at setting them free for life in its fullness.’<sup>128</sup> He also claims that ‘convergence continues to occur between spiritual direction and psychotherapy’ with the possibility that ‘underlying anthropological assumptions may come to be all that distinguishes these two disciplines.’ Hence it is not surprising that he begins his new model on the basis of a psychotherapeutic understanding of the interpersonal relationship that Burton claims is generally given primacy in pastoral counselling.<sup>129</sup>

A highly simplified version of the diagram Burton employs to depict the nature of this relationship is reproduced in **Fig 7** below. This model indicates a (two-dimensional) ‘overlap’ of the persons involved, and the fact that, to quote the figure’s accompanying text, ‘God’s presence in the relationship between counsellor and counsellee is neither affirmed nor denied’. Next Burton introduces us to a description of pastoral counselling subtitled ‘God’s presence is explicitly acknowledged, without necessarily impinging on the therapeutic relationship’. His diagrammatic representation of this situation, again highly simplified, appears in **Fig.8**. Finally, as a result of his argument for reframing pastoral counselling in terms of Spiritual Direction Burton is able to draw a new diagram, reproduced, again in a highly simplified format, in **Fig. 9**.

\*In Burton’s original version of this latter diagram the accompanying text says we see ‘counsellor and counsellee consciously and deliberately enter[ing] into a triological

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<sup>125</sup> Graham, 1996:43 & 173; see Kung, 1989.

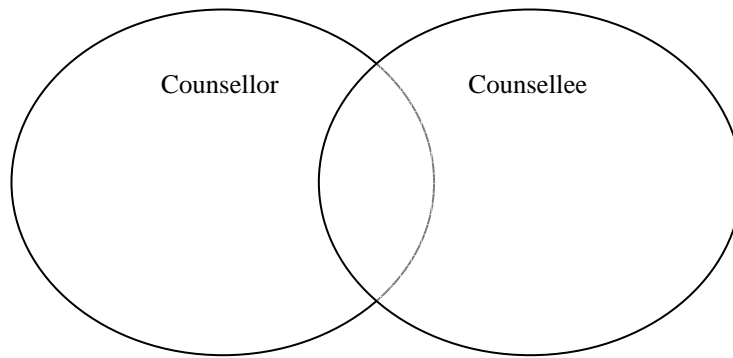
<sup>126</sup> Graham, 1996:113-114.

<sup>127</sup> Burton, Rod, 1998.

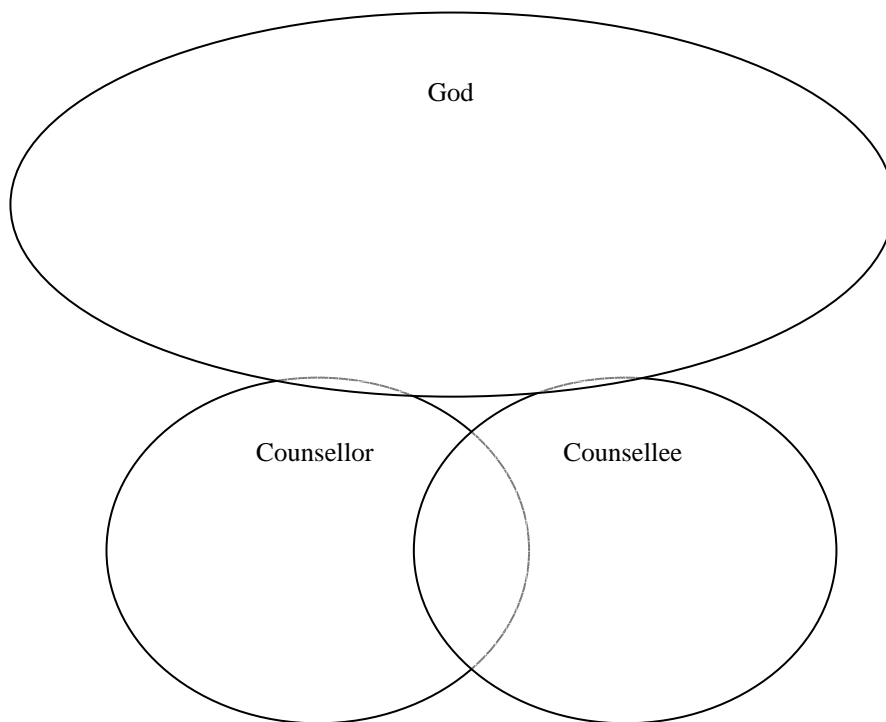
<sup>128</sup> Burton, 1998:14.

<sup>129</sup> Burton, 1998:17,15.

relationship with God'.<sup>130</sup> We also see something else. We see three participants in a relationship in which the three are portrayed as 'different, overlapping, but not co-terminus' participants in the relationship. This echoes not only the epistemology that undergirds this study, but also the model of Trinity being used in this dissertation. It would seem reasonable to examine that model for clues as to the nature of Trinitarian pastoral care.



**Fig 7. Psychotherapy.**<sup>131</sup>

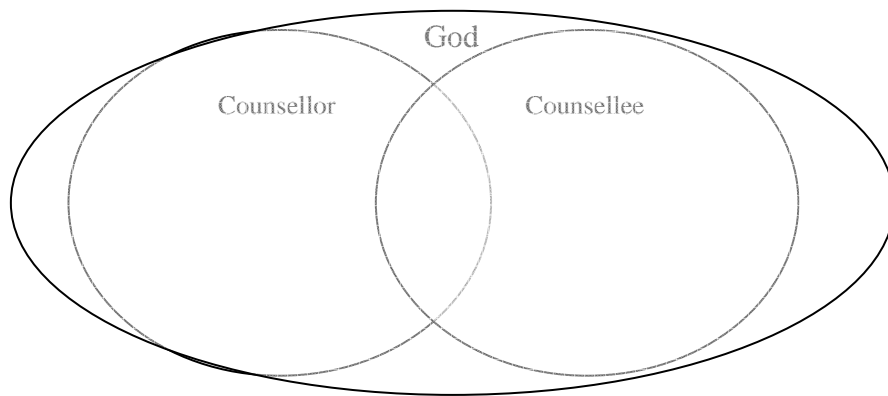


**Fig 8. Pastoral Counselling (see reference to Fig 7).**

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<sup>130</sup> See reference to **Fig 7**.

<sup>131</sup> This, and the following two figures, are versions of Figures 1,2, and 3 in Burton, 1998:15,16

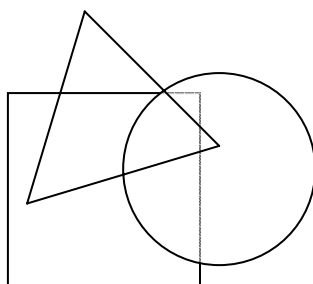


**Fig 9. Spiritual Direction (see reference to Fig 7).**

\*Pastoral Care.

The nature of Pastoral Care has often been described in terms of functions – for example, Clebsch and Jaekle’s broad examination of the Christian heritage produced a long-respected definition of pastoral care as Healing, Sustaining, Guiding and Reconciling<sup>132</sup>. It seems to me, however, that a more useful approach for the *current* age would be to turn to matters of *policy*. That it will ultimately prove more useful to contemporary society to know ‘what Godde is like’ than ‘what God has been doing’.

Returning to my diagrammatic representation of the model of Trinity (reproduced in **Fig 10** with a new legend) the task becomes that of asking what it reveals of the policy that informs the mode of relating in Godde.



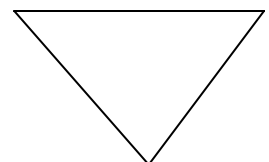
**Fig. 10. A diagrammatic representation of The Three, with the different shapes representing the different Persons (as seen in the following legend).**

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Generator

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<sup>132</sup> Clinebell, 1966:42; see also Taylor, 1983:30.



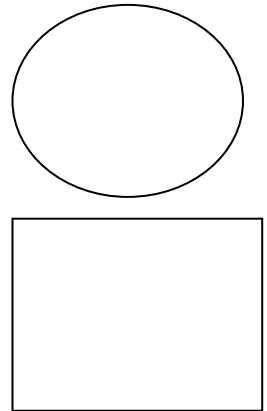
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Generated One

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Holy Spirit



*Encounter.*

Inevitably, what different people see in this representation will differ, which is where the situatedness of my analysis comes to the fore, and I immediately need to own it as inherently provisional. Nonetheless I suspect that there would be wide agreement that the shapes in the figure above are *touching* each other. That they are very close, as opposed to being scattered on the page. Whatever else may not be deduced from this it indicates contact that, if it ceased, would destroy the ability of the diagram to represent Godde. Putting this into more relationship-oriented language, what we are looking at is the Three meeting up with, or *encountering* each other.

Studies into the consequences of maternal deprivation in infancy suggest just how important human encounter is. The general conclusion from research investigating why children in child care institutions do not tend to thrive as well as those with their natural parents was that ‘the deprivation offered by the institution chiefly stems from insufficiency of intimate interpersonal interaction’ rather than sensory or other deprivation.<sup>133</sup> To be deprived of encounter in infancy results in developmental retardation – often a global impairment of developmental processes, with language and social responsiveness usually most affected.<sup>134</sup>

Translating this into the language of pastoral care, this means that for care to be pastoral in the Trinitarian mode (hereafter simply ‘pastoral’) it, too, must involve encounter, whether at a one-to-one or one-to-group level.<sup>135</sup> It becomes important to encounter people, rather than simply speak or listen to them.

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<sup>133</sup> Rutter, 1972:87.

<sup>134</sup> Rutter, 1992:30.

<sup>135</sup> E.g. as in base communities (ref. Boff, 1993:117-129).



This is because encounter as I am choosing to define it here is not a one-sided matter. It cannot be said that one shape in the diagram is *qualitatively* touching another ‘more’ even though there may be quantitative differences. This mutual touching bears resemblance to an understanding of communication, defined as ‘transmission of information to elicit a response’, with especial interest in the transmission of *non-verbal* information.<sup>136</sup> This sort of communication is a mutual activity, for the activity of perception and reception is crucial part to the process. It is not personality-dependent either, for it is only in the process of encounter, understood in terms of communication, that the responses we assign to personality are discovered.

This is one reason why different personalities cannot be said to encounter more than others, even while some will be more cautious in revealing information about themselves or seeking information about others. Neither the Briggs Myers nor the Enneagram personality systems require us to think of encounter in non-mutual terms.<sup>137</sup> They both present personality as a more or less genetically influenced human response to the effects of encountering in early socialisation, and recognise that personality only becomes apparent, even to the individual displaying it, in further encounters.

As a guide for pastoral practice therefore, the principle of mutual encounter would make it impossible for a pastor to ‘give out’ pastoral care of a one-sided nature. This is not to say it would require participants to respond to each other in an *equivalent* manner, but rather that the element of ‘taking into account’ of the other in encounter be a mutual experience. By this description one could not claim to be providing pastoral care through publishing a book, even if its theme was the praxis of pastoral care. The principle of encounter would require the lives involved to be ‘touched’ in some way.<sup>138</sup>

### *Empathy.*

A second feature of the diagram in **Fig 10** is the *overlap* between the shapes. The fact that the mode of presentation enables us to see their outlines ‘through’ the other shapes suggests their interpenetration (to use a perichoretic term). It hints at the kind of sharing of each others’ existence that in relationship terms might best be described in terms of *empathy*. It is also worth noting that while many overlaps are only between two participants there is also a significant overlap of all three.

Looking back at Burton’s model of Therapeutic Spiritual Direction (**Fig 9.**) we see an expression of the sense many Christians have that God lives beyond us, outside our world. Transcending it as well as encompassing and pervading it. Both Counsellor and Counsellee are seen to have a ‘private’ overlap with God that is *not* shared with the other human and exists other than at the point of encounter between them. However, at the point of encounter, that overlap is shared, intensifying the significance of the otherwise apparently limited overlap between the two humans.

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<sup>136</sup> Aranguren, 1967:11.

<sup>137</sup> Briggs Myers, 1987:4.; Rohr and Ebert, 1990:4.

It needs to be noted that while the shapes indicate the differences between The Three they cannot also convey the action of perichoresis in which the overlap of the Three is more correctly *entire*. This suggests that care that *begins* in the mode of Therapeutic Spiritual Direction, and therefore in the foregoing analysis has many features of Trinitarian model, can hope to become more adequately Trinitarian with increasing empathy.

A further point of interest concerning the overlaps in **Fig 10** is their three-way nature. A two-way empathic relationship that ignores a third member is found in **Fig 8** and it will be remembered that Burton found this essentially binary model unsatisfactory. A reading of **Fig 10** that takes the *three-way* nature of the overlap seriously will suggest that two-way empathy – between human and human or human and Divine persons - does not indicate Trinitarian pastoral care. In other words, that Burton was expressing a Trinitarian motivation in seeking to incorporate God in the pastoral counselling relationship (ref. **Fig 9**).

So far I have spoken of empathy without defining it. It is important to realise that empathy is not an emotion (even while admitting that it is normally not devoid of emotion).<sup>139</sup> It may be thought of as a form of resonance.<sup>140</sup> A relationship in which both participants are aware of empathy is likely to have enjoyed mutual empathic listening at some point, defined as ‘active listening demanding an emotional investment in the other and relative openness to one’s own feelings’.<sup>141</sup> The word empathy is, however, best defined in a motivational sense (see below).<sup>142</sup> This is important, for it means that, given that we assume the participation of Godde in the pastoral care relationship the principle of empathy would act to maximise the degree of overlap between pastor and cared for in the area, not of feelings, but of *shared motivations*.

A motive is usually broken down into two components – an internal drive that goads a person into action, and an internally judged goal or reward terminating the motive.<sup>143</sup> Of course both may well have been emotional in origin, which begins to suggest the complex relationship between motivation and emotion. Describing empathy in motivational terms simply means that as a general principle, when the pastor is faced with a person who is feeling unwanted emotions, the principle of empathy will not be about sharing their feelings as about expanding their range of possible motivational outcomes.

This further distances pastoral care from most non-directive counselling in that it accepts the influence of the pastor’s own motivations (as long as they empathise with Godde’s). To my mind this is in any case a more honest approach, for in my

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<sup>139</sup> Murray, 1964:56.

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<sup>141</sup> Clinebell, 1966:77.

<sup>142</sup> Murray, 1964.

<sup>143</sup> Murray, 1964:7,8.

experience the counsellor's own world-view inevitably subtly influences the caring encounter – and therefore its outcome – no matter how non-directive the counsellor is aiming to be.

To develop this a step further I suggest that the ideal motivation to pastoral care will be an entire empathic *relating*. Empathic relating is ideally no more one-sided than encounter, as suggested in the following poem;

The Counselling Encounter<sup>144</sup>

He asked.  
He listened.  
He felt full Empathy.

(But I didn't know,  
as he never told me so.)

This is not to imply that in pastoral care the pastor and cared for share themselves in *equivalent* manner. It is merely a departure from the popular notion that pastoral care is about (usually non-directive) counselling. It distances the two both through allowing the pastor to be pro-active in the relationship and by refusing the notion that they can be personally unchanged by the experience of care.

This comes as no surprise, because it seems highly unlikely that Trinitarian policies, based on a model of God in which empathic sharing is constantly modified by unchanging difference-in-relationship,<sup>145</sup> would prefer the cloning of only one expression of it. For example it seems likely that in practice there are variations in the quantity of verbal contributions different parties to the relationship make. This allows the giving of sermons to be situated within pastoral care, provided they are 'empathic' in line with the definition above.

As a guiding principle the need to ensure the presence of empathy suggests we should maximise opportunities for natural empathy.<sup>146</sup> This seems to me to have consequences for where pastors live and who pastors are, as well as supporting the current attitude to the use of *role-play* in pastoral formation. The latter is seen as an attempt to 'get within that person's frame of reference' and so 'provide valuable practice in empathetic understanding'.<sup>147</sup>

On the question of where pastors should live I feel the principle of empathy recommends pastors to live near those they serve. Shared local experiences – be they

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<sup>144</sup> Batton, 1999:1.

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<sup>147</sup> Clinebell, 1966:22.

negative or positive – can be expected to support the pastor in the process of giving care. In those cases where the pastor could not reasonably be expected to live nearby the principle would work to encourage people to seek an improved environment as a matter of urgency. Of course the variable of choice in where one lives will affect the ability of shared location to produce true empathy, though I suspect without reducing the opportunities for shared motivation to improve or maintain things. The option of genuine choice may even be of crucial importance to the incorporation of empathy in care.<sup>148</sup>

On the question of who pastors are I suggest the principle of empathy recommends Christians try to ensure that in their pastorate *as a whole* there is natural empathy with all those to be served. By this I mean that it is not only drawn from a particular social category, and assumes the willingness to pool resources in the interests of the group task. On the smaller scale it would also recommend appointing mixed *teams* of individual pastors to mixed constituencies that between them are as far as possible representative of those they serve.

### *Empowerment.*

For the third principle being drawn from **Fig 10** I move beyond the contact (encounter) and overlap (empathy) of the shapes in the pattern to consider the overall effect of the figure and refer back to the discussion of a postmodern approach to language above. The pattern is shaping my thinking about Godde, and in the present context is influencing how I think and speak about pastoral care. It is having a powerful effect on this thesis. Its relationship with the paradigm of care I am pursuing is not entirely dissimilar in manner of operation to the relationship of The Three with the world Godde has created and continues to create. Within a metaphysic of connection as proposed by Grey<sup>149</sup> this simple model has power to contribute to the creation of new theological ‘alloys’. Even a simple, two-dimensional representation of Divine relations has creative power in the task of dealing with reality. In relational terms we are looking at a combination of relations that is *empowering*.

This suggests that a hallmark of pastoral care will be that it produces a sense of being empowered to create something new. This is important for evaluation purposes. If what has been ‘achieved’ in the process of care cannot be articulated or demonstrated in some way the fact will cast doubt on whether the care has been truly pastoral. Conversely, if it can be demonstrated that care has enabled participants to the relationship to experience a change, in line with Divine aspirations, in the way they see and act in the world, then the care can be judged both pastoral and successful. Perhaps even more importantly, the principle of empowerment indicates that pastoral care must never be found *disempowering* people (e.g. by creating dependency upon the pastor, or requiring the cared for to tolerate an unjust situation).

Empowerment can be defined as enabling people to act in line with their inner motivations, which introduces what I will call a Divine risk into the process. In the case of the most fiercely oppressed their motivations are likely to derive from the

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<sup>148</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Grey, 1991:7.

need to survive.<sup>150</sup> Whether oppressed or not, as we have seen, the operation of empathy in the relationship may be expected to influence the motivations involved. However in no case of Trinitarian care will it be possible for the pastor to control or pre-determine the motivational outcomes being enabled. The three-way relationship will be a kind of cauldron out of which unexpected and truly creative results emerge.

This lack of control may be actively resisted. Bishop Holloway writes,

‘...change is painful and disorienting to most people, ...[and is]... particularly resisted by those who derive some sort of privilege or power from the status quo. Sometimes this is an obvious and blatant refusal to share power and its benefits with some excluded group, such as Blacks in Apartheid South Africa or women in most human groupings up to and including the present day. Those engaged in the rearguard action are rarely candid in their reasons for refusing to share power or lift restrictions from the subordinated group. [They] offer elaborate theoretical justifications for the maintenance of existing evils or the refusal to remove arbitrary restraints upon the freedom of others.’<sup>151</sup>

And again, ‘Christian thinkers are still engaged in preserving unjust structures by theoretical arguments that justify them, but the theology is usually a cloak to cover a straightforward refusal to share power. We have seen this phenomenon again and again in Christian history. The shorthand term for it is Original Sin’.<sup>152</sup>

This leads me to pick up the idea of ‘sharing power’ and note that the empowerment in Trinitarian care will not be after the manner of levelling out the distribution of power, as will the idea of, say, sharing out a number of sweets between children. The natural, mutual, result of the caring encounter in Trinitarian mode will be not the sharing of some sort of limited commodity but the creation of additional, new power to do and be in the world. As with the creative outcome of Trinitarian relations – Creation itself - the outcome of Trinitarian pastoral care relations will be an outflowing of power to act and be in line with the shared motivations of all three participants in the relationship: pastor, those cared for, and Godde.

#### *Material realities and the question of balance.*

The three features described above occupy different ‘planes’ of material reality, involving all known modes of being in its practice. Encounter exists in the two planes of existence that together make up the kind of reality found in its most profound expression in the concept of the ‘sacramental’. It is something real and tangible and locatable within time and space, while at the same time dependent upon the presence of a kind of engagement that is not an automatic corollary of proximity. Encounter requires contact in an essential or material sense but is more than that for the physical component of the encounter must be received in a meaningful way to become encounter. Encounter is *essential* and *quasi-sacramental*. Empathy occupies a different category. It exists but cannot be pinned down to a specified location and has no material component. Empathy is essentially *existential*, in the sense of being

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<sup>150</sup> See Grey, 1991a.

<sup>151</sup> Holloway, 1997:172.

<sup>152</sup> Holloway, 1997:180.

concerned with especially human existence, freedom and individual responsibility, as defined above. Empowerment differs from both the above in that it is about action and change, movement and *process*.

It is not difficult to see in these considerations an outline of different kinds of reality found in what we know of the three Persons of Godde, though it would be hard to pin each of the Three to merely one of the modes of being described. This is not surprising, given that the Athanasian Creed teaches us their difference is relational, not substantial, and their inner life is forever a perichoretic dynamic of process displaying the 'lure towards new patterns of connection' described in Grey's theology of God.<sup>153</sup> The differences between these three kinds of reality might also have been likened to the differences between nouns (essential), adjectives (existential), and verbs (process) in philology. Together these components comprise the metaphorical 'language' of pastoral care policy being proposed.

Before moving to an evaluation of my thesis there is one more factor that must be incorporated into the paradigm of care that has emerged. This is the factor of equality, discussed and proposed above in relation to the questions of hierarchy in Godde and shown to be not inconsistent with differences in authority within the relationship. If equality is re-imaged in terms of *balance* it can take my thesis beyond the proposal that Grey's model of God translates into a paradigm of encounter, empathy and empowerment. It allows me to not only insist on the presence of all three before care can be termed pastoral but also to seek a balanced input of all three aspects. Again, this does not mean *equivalence*, but it does suggest that the pastor has no license to imagine that extra quantities of, say, encounter, will compensate for lack of empathy or empowerment in the relationship. This might not only contribute to the task of planning and evaluating pastoral care but also be used by individual pastors to monitor their own practice. If they should begin to notice one or more of the three factors is missing from the service they offer it will alert them to a need to address the source of the distortion.

## \*EVALUATION

The overall claim of the foregoing analysis is that Trinitarian pastoral care will involve encounter, empathy and empowerment. This represents success in the task of teasing out a new paradigm for care from the material with which I have worked. However my claims must be regarded as provisional for several reasons. One, as previously admitted, is the limitations embodied in the motivations that will have influenced the course of my reflection as a result of my own situatedness. Another is the possibly eisegetical nature<sup>154</sup> of my engagement with others' ideas: Browning's understanding of correlative theology Stubbs' description of postmodernism as it affects language, Grosz's postmodern epistemology, the history and formulations of the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity, Grey's contemporary theology of 'The Core of Our Desire'; Burton's model of a re-imaged pastoral counselling in terms of Therapeutic Spiritual Direction and the psychotherapeutic concept employed by Bion and Foukes of projective identification. Yet another reason is the dynamism inherent

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<sup>153</sup> Grey, 1990:369.

<sup>154</sup>

in the whole enterprise of applied theology in a world in which change is a fundamental feature of life.

In choosing those elements of contemporary knowledge of Divine and human relationality that have been enabled to enter into dialogue here I have had to consider carefully what to include in and what exclude from the dialogue. I suspect it would have been more intellectually satisfying, though emotionally less fulfilling, to reduce the number of the 'colours' in the collage. I retained them because I regard this topic as requiring this sort of breadth if it is to do justice to my concern to do theology with the Tradition that will resonate with contemporary experience. Drawing all the various influences together has been difficult, however, and I have been particularly conscious of the difficulty of knowing at which point to enter the circle of debate in each case.

Use of the word 'circle' also indicates my awareness of the possibility that what has emerged may in fact have become a *closed* circle, the main feature of which is the exclusion of input that does not suit my thesis. Ultimately the perceived value of the model proposed may reasonably depend on the ideologies underpinning the means used for evaluating it. However, as my principle aim in considering the subject was to arrive at a model of care for my own use in my future role as Deacon this provisionality cannot be regarded as a weakness in the research.

As was mentioned in the introduction, my paradigm might usefully be correlated with similar results from similar explorations based on different views of God. There is also the possibility that a possibly more independent evaluation might be made by research into the application of a paradigm of encounter-empathy-empowerment to the assessment of all human relationships (i.e. with others, with the rest of Creation, and with Godde.)

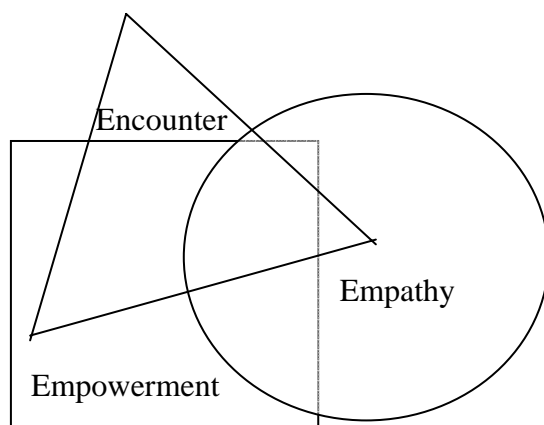
## \*CONCLUSION

In the Introduction to this thesis I first discussed the methodology being used and then described the contemporary postmodern epistemology and understanding of language being employed in the research, paying attention to feminist concerns. This provided a background for the examination of historical, philosophical and contemporary examinations of the relational aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity. The latter required definition of the concepts of perichoresis and hypostatic Personhood; and introduced Mary Grey's theology of God. I eventually arrived at a working understanding of Godde as a Divine relational community comprising three inherently relational *hypostases* whom we tend to call and think of as 'Persons'. These Persons eternally exist together, interpenetrating and inter-relating in a non-dualistic co-equal, co-inherent participatory relationship that is transcendent and immanent, hierarchical and egalitarian.

The discourse then turned to pay attention to human persons and relations in a way that revealed them to be generally more Godde-like than may be generally imagined, giving some evidence of a dynamic intra- and inter-human relational identity and life

similar to that seen in Godde. This lent weight to my thesis that it is valid to seek to correlate Divine and human inter-personal relations in the interests of applied theology, and led me to enquire into Burton's diagrammatic representation of the human relationship of pastoral counselling. Allowing this model to dialogue with my previous epistemologically- and traditionally-informed diagrammatic representation of Grey's 'God' became the basis for the latter section of the discourse, which constituted a search for clues as to nature and quality of a care relationship modelled on Godde.

Concentrating and reflecting on the portrayal of divine relationships in **Fig 10** I arrived at three crucial features of Divine inter-Personal relating - those of encounter, empathy and empowerment. The remaining discussion involved suggestions concerning how these features might prove useful policy guides in the planning and delivery of pastoral care. It was further noted that these factors span the known categories of material reality and that doctrinal knowledge of the operation of Trinitarian relations suggests all known categories are present in Godde. A final point was that the model seems to require all three features to be present in a way that appears 'balanced' if pastoral care is to be deemed truly Trinitarian. The conclusions of the research can be represented in **Fig 11** below, which is a representation of the proposed contemporary paradigm for Trinitarian pastoral care that has been my chief conclusion as a result of this research:



**Fig 11. Contemporary paradigm for Trinitarian pastoral care.**

I am satisfied that the research has produced an 'alloy' that I will find personally useful as a guide to my own practice as a Deacon in future years. I feel it might also prove useful to inter-faith studies interested in correlating understandings of pastoral care informed by different theologies. Finally, I suggest it might usefully inform the practice of all human care, and perhaps all human relating, not those relationships that we like to define as pastoral.



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